



Campus agencies using social media

- Angelo State University Police Department, San Angelo, Texas
- Louisiana State University Police Department, Baton Rouge
- University of Texas at Austin Police Department

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CAMPUS LAW ENFORCEMENT SOCIAL MEDIA FACT SHEET

What is social media?

Social media is integrated technology that allows users to generate their own content and share that content through various connections. Social media focuses on integration, collaboration, and interaction. Examples of social media include social networking sites, microblogging sites, photo- and video-sharing sites, location-based networking sites, and blogs.

Why should campus law enforcement care about social media?

Audience: Most of your intended audience is already using social media. 92 percent of Internet users ages 18 to 29 use social networking sites.¹ Agencies can reach a large portion of their population through social media. Using social media can also help keep campus staff, parents, alumni, prospective students, visitors, and the local community aware of what is happening on campus.

Immediacy: Social media allows agencies to post messages in real time, notifying the campus community immediately of events, news, or emergencies.

Interaction: Social media facilitates conversations and interactions among users. Agencies can engage the campus community, achieving a new level of transparency and communication.

Cost: Many social media sites are free. The only cost associated with social media is the amount of time you spend posting content or interacting with those who follow you. You can spend as much, or as little, time as you deem appropriate posting content, responding to comments and inquiries, and engaging your campus community. Generally, the more your pages are updated, the more engaged your audience will be.

Uses for social media

Social media can be used in many ways and different platforms can be tailored to different uses.

Delayed openings and closures: In cases of inclement weather or other incidents, social media can be used to broadcast campus closures and delayed openings.

Emergency notifications: Whether the emergency is a chemical spill in a science lab, an active shooter situation, or another event, using social media can allow you to distribute quick, accurate information about it. Updates can also be posted as more information is made available or when a particular situation is resolved.

Safety tips: Some campus law enforcement agencies use social media to publish safety tips for students. These tips may include not leaving laptops and other electronics unattended; making sure to lock dorm rooms; making sure to walk in groups late at night; and other personal, dorm, and general safety tips.

Campus events: You can use social media to promote events such as Rape Aggression Defense classes and other department events. When a speaker, a concert, or a sporting event is scheduled, for example, your agency can use social media to advertise traffic and parking changes and security tips.

Considerations

Policy and Strategy: It is important to have a social media policy that addresses the unique concerns and functions of a campus law enforcement agency. It is also important to have a strategy that identifies how your agency plans on using social media. Do you plan on using social media to cite students for violations of campus policies? Do you plan to use it for outreach? Do you plan to do both? Consult your university's legal and communications offices to determine the most effective approach. It may also be helpful to browse other campus law enforcement agencies' sites to see how they are using the various platforms.

Marketing: Once you have determined how your agency will use social media, you will need to promote your online activities. Keep in mind, if students perceive your presence as an enforcement mechanism, they may be hesitant to engage.

¹ Joanna Brenner, "Pew Internet: Social Networking," Pew Internet and American Life Project, November 13, 2012.